

Shelton, Janet

Agriculture

From: Markham, Peter G
Sent: Wednesday, August 01, 2012 10:12 AM
To: Shelton, Janet
Subject: FW: Wind Storm Response AAR
Attachments: MRE Distribution AAR - revised.docx; WVDA AFTER ACTION REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE.docx

From: Blackwood, Matt [mailto:MBlackwood@wvda.us]
Sent: Tuesday, July 31, 2012 11:43 PM
To: Markham, Peter G
Cc: McCallister, Roy; Stonestreet, Ray
Subject: Wind Storm Response AAR

Please find the After-Action Reports for the Wind Storm Response attached. The WVDA AAR Questionnaire relates to some of the activities conducted by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture.

The MRE Distribution AAR is the combined analysis related to the distribution of MREs.

If you have any questions please feel free to call or email.

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MRE Distribution After-Action Notes

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Introduction

This After-Action Review focuses on our (Capt. Ray Stonestreet with WV State Police and Roy McCallister and Matt Blackwood from the WV Department of Agriculture) involvement in the coordination of MREs (meals ready to eat) distribution. The distribution of MREs started off with a few hiccups, but by the end of the mission it was running very smooth. The greatest challenge we faced was finding suitable transportation. The system utilized evolved over the nearly two-week mission and we made modifications as we became more familiar with what needed to occur.

When we arrived at the state emergency operations center (EOC) on Monday, July 2, we found that there was not a plan in place to coordinate the delivery of MREs. From our perspective there did not appear to be any sense of urgency in getting food moving.

While the American Red Cross was making arrangements for mobile kitchens, they did not appear to have any plans to provide short-term solutions for feeding individuals. That was a concern for us. The coordination of feeding seemed to be under the radar of most agencies. Even though the delivery of food was not the responsibility of the WV State Police or the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, we saw a need and we volunteered to take the lead in that mission.

We took great pride in our role in coordinating the distribution of MREs. We sent out nearly 500,000 during our response to the Wind Storm event. Shipments were made to over half of the state. Our crew worked 12 days on coordinating the food delivery. We took our mission seriously and we want to ensure that during future responses this aspect of a state-wide response works smoothly.

System Process

At most times we had two state representatives working on this project at the National Guard facility at Yeager Airport. Under the best circumstances one person served as the primary contact with the State EOC and recorded orders and prepared load sheets. A second person worked in the loading area to ensure that vehicles were being properly loaded. At times a third person was needed to help place calls to destination locations.

Our role in the distribution of the MREs was to process the orders sent by the State Emergency Operations Center. We would arrange transportation, coordinate with the requesting agency, and load the requested MREs. If a county needed a shipment of MREs they were required to place the request in E-team and once it was approved (by the State EOC) we would fill the order.

Every evening and throughout the day we received E-team requests via email. These requests contained all of the information we needed to place the order (i.e. destination, eteam number, POC, quantity, etc.). Once we

received that information we wrote it down on 3x5 note cards so that we could place it on our order board. The FEMA representative assigned to work with us wrote down that information for his records.

We then arranged the cards based upon available transportation. Once the orders were loaded and sent, we wrote time out on the cards. We also used the card to track the agency transporting the loads. The cards served as our official records. Copies of the cards were provided to the load crew so they knew how many pallets to load.

We shipped based upon the pallet. If orders were received based upon the number of meals, we determined the number of pallets necessary to provide the requested number of meals. We sent the number of pallets that would cover the amount requested (we would round to the next full pallet). In the future we need to ensure that we have a consistent understanding of number of meals for pallet.

When we had orders and vehicles, we called the Air Guard to load the pallets. We simply told them how many pallets that needed to be loaded and then let them do their work. It was a perfect system for loading. Using one of the hangers was beneficial because it allowed the loading crew to stage orders in the hanger. It made loading the vehicles much simpler.

We would coordinate the specific assignments of vehicles based upon available transportation. We would make requests from different state agencies for them to provide transportation the night before based upon standing orders. We relied on vehicles from the WV Department of Environmental Protection, the WV State Police, the WV Division of Corrections, and the WV Department of Agriculture to assist in transporting MREs.

Several times we had National Guard trucks arrive with orders from the Joint Operations Center (JOC) [once we began receiving assistance later in the operation]. We had to explain that we were giving the specific assignments and not the JOC. Luckily the Air Guard loading crew would not load MREs without specific authorization from us. A couple of times the Army Guard tried to pick up loads of MREs that had already been delivered. Several times we had to change the mission of these Army Guard trucks because of their delay in getting to the loading area. Given the importance of moving food, we had to make other transportation arrangements.

Towards the end of the mission we were able to rely more heavily on the Army National Guard. Once an LNO (Liaison Officer) was permanently assigned to our operations it went much better.

To help in tracking of orders we developed a MRE Distribution Database. This allowed us to enter load information. We could also then develop reports to help track loads. This database is still developmental. In future operations it could be used to print load sheets for drivers. This database was share with our FEMA representative and our records should match perfectly.

Successful Points

Overall the mission to distribute the MREs was successful. If we applied the lessons learned in the future a similar type of mission would go smooth. The greatest success of this mission was the collaborative effort between a variety of state agencies that came together to address this need.

1. Air Guard loading crew. They were a top-notch group. They would have been impossible to replace with private contractors. It was great working with Chief Pritt and his crew.

2. Facilities. Working out of the Air National Guard facilities was a great place to conduct our operations. Based upon how thing went it is clear that we need to be in close proximity to where the trucks are being loaded.
3. Use of the Army National Guard trucks for transportation. Towards the end of the mission the process for requesting the Army National Guard was smooth and efficient. The assignment of Sgt. Call as an LNO to our operation allowed for us to quickly arrange for the use of National Guard vehicles.
4. The transmission of information with the State Emergency Operations Center. The daily meal request emails worked well.

Challenge Areas

As stated earlier, overall this mission went well. Early in the process there were a few problems.

On the first day when we started shipment of the MREs there were problems in getting the Army National Guard to transport the MREs. We had a vehicle loaded but it was not allowed to leave the base. We were told that they needed to have a mission number. We explained that they only reference number was the E-team number. That did not seem to work. After several delays the E-team number seemed to be enough but they still had to develop their own mission number.

We were then assigned a LNO (a Captain) to work with us. He stayed up there with us for about an hour and then he left. He then sent up a lieutenant to serve as our LNO. He stayed a little longer. Finally on Saturday, July 7 we were sent another LNO. This time it was a Sergeant. Once he was in place it worked great. We commend Sgt. Richard Call for his help. Having him there with us really expedited the process of requesting rmy National Guard vehicles.

Even after the process of requesting vehicles improved there were other problems. It appears that sometimes the vehicles loaded and then went off the hill and waited. We know that one time that trucks waited several hours at the bottom of the hill. The response we received from the bottom of the hill was that those were empty trucks waiting to be loaded. We know in fact those were full. The truck in question was a flatbed trailer (with no sides) and the person reporting them sitting down there was a Colonel who had helped load the truck. He even recognized the drivers. We exchanged numerous emails. It appears that that problem was fixed.

In many cases the Army Guard trucks were not ready to be loaded when they arrived at our staging area. It was common from them to be filled with trash and cases of water. In several cases the personnel were not familiar with how to drop the sides of their trucks. Many did not have straps necessary to secure the pallets of MREs. In the future it is important that the drivers take advantage of down time to prepare their trucks. We also asked them not to load water until the MRE pallets were loaded. It is easier to pack the water around the pallets. In several cases it would take upwards of 30 minutes to unload the Army Guard trucks before we could load the pallets.

Another problem reported several times by the drivers delivering the MREs was that the destination sites were not prepared to receive the loads. This meant that they either did not have equipment to load or that they did not have any personnel available. In one case, a driver had to call in family members who lived nearby to help nload. This is one of the reasons that we needed to have an additional person available to help call the receiving counties to alert them that they MREs were being shipped.

It also appears that the orders placed by the American Red Cross were not coordinated with the county emergency manager. It seems as if these orders should be coordinated.

e also had no way to track the delivery of the MREs to the counties. While we knew when the shipment left our loading area, we had no way to tell when they arrived. We might want to look at providing a load sheet for the receiving agency to sign. This load sheet could provide a paper trail for the shipment of the MREs. Is that important to other people? For future operations is it critical to have an individual sign for delivery? On many of our loads the drivers made multiple stops and were instructed to off-load a certain number of pallets at each stop. It appears that some drivers might have dropped off the wrong number of pallets at the different stops. All of the MREs were delivered; it just might not have been the correct number at each stop. However, many of the sites did not even record what they were receiving, so it is not clear if mistakes occurred or not. Having an official representative of the requesting agency sign for the MREs in the future would ensure that proper deliveries were being made.

There were rumors that private contractors were available to help in the transportation of the MREs. We heard that these drivers had a contract directly with the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Those trucks and drivers never materialized. Luckily, we reached out to other state agencies and requested their assistance in the transportation of MREs.

For the first few days we primarily relied on state agency vehicles. The challenge is that many of those state trucks and trailers had a limited capacity and frequently required hand-loading. While those were valuable in getting MREs moved, the extended use of those vehicles would strain the ability of those agencies from completing their normal duties.

At some point there needs to be a discussion related to the use of small trucks and trailers in hauling these pallets long distances. It would not be cost effective to use a pick-up truck to haul to Jefferson County. We need to develop a plan for setting up other operation locations or contract the movement with larger trucks.

Additional problems identified:

1. No way to track E-team requests at loading area
2. E-team orders with incorrect information (limited problem)
3. No way to confirm loads have arrived at site
4. No clear direction in who assigns Army Guard their missions to move food
5. Conflicting orders between JOC and EOC
6. Army Guard vehicles not ready to be loaded
 - a. Vehicles full of trash and gear
 - b. Personnel did not know how to drop sides of vehicles
 - c. Personnel not familiar with destinations – provide drivers with highlighted map
7. Need to develop a plan for consistent ordering
 - a. Pallets vs. meals (remember we shipped whole pallets and would round up to next pallet)
 - b. How to handle standing orders? Develop protocol for e-team
 - c. Develop a sheet to provide to State EOC with pallet to meal conversion

WV Emergency Operations Plan

The questions that we have asked each other from the very beginning is "What state agency is responsible for mass care?" and "Why did they not participate in this effort?"

The mission to distribute MREs is most closely aligned with Annex F of the WV State Emergency Operations Plan which deals with Mass Care. Here are a few relevant points from our review of our involvement and what information is provided in the Mass Care Annex. The WV Department of Health and Human Resources and the American Red Cross are the primary agencies assigned to take the lead in Mass Care operations. It does not appear that any of the agencies assigned responsibility for Mass Care recognized that MRE distribution was needed. We did not receive any support from those agencies in completing our mission. That was very disappointing. This was a great learning opportunity.

While Annex F clearly states that one element of mass care is the "mass distribution of food", it is not clear who should be doing that mission. We all know that all incidents start at the local level. However, according to the Annex if a local unit of government is overwhelmed, more of the emphasis is placed on the role of the state government. It is clear many of the local governments needed the help of the state. The problem is identifying the right place at the state level where that responsibility rests.

Another relevant point is that the WV Department of Transportation, Division of Highways is tasked within Annex F as having the responsibility to "provide transportation for the distribution of food, water and other shelter supplies." We understand and appreciate their service in helping clear roads; however, when we asked for their assistance in this matter they told us that *the transportation of food was not their job*. The WV Department of Environmental Protection, the WV State Police, WV Division of Corrections and the WV Department of Agriculture voluntarily took it upon themselves to provide coordination and transportation of the MREs to the designated locations.

Based upon the confusion over roles and responsibilities associated with Mass Care (especially with distribution of MREs on this scale) a complete review of Annex F is warranted.

Recommendations

1. Personnel at loading area need to have direct access to E-team and have the ability to print orders. This could potentially require a wireless aircard to have Internet access. This would also require having a place to set up operations.
2. During the operation we typically had two people working at the operations site at a time. That worked well. However, we needed to have additional personnel to allow for rotation of staff. These people should monitor operations to learn the process.
3. We should pick up a box of state highway maps to provide to drivers. We could mark recommended routes.
4. We should develop better tracking cards. Looking at four-part NCR paper for load sheets. A copy could be kept for state records, one provided to FEMA, one to agency transporting the loads, and one to the driver. This is also available on the computer.
5. We should develop a box to contain supplies for operation. This would include basic office supplies.
6. We have developed a database to help track these requests. It is designed to print load sheets and to print reports. This is something that might be useful in the future. Where should it go?

Final Thoughts

If an incident occurred tomorrow, all of us would be more than willing to take the lead in this effort. This was a great opportunity to learn from our mistakes. Our intent is not to assign blame or find fault with other agencies. We just want to make sure that we (*as a state*) are better prepared for the future.

AFTER ACTION REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Agency/Commission: **West Virginia Department of Agriculture**

Project/Event: Emergency response to storm-related state of emergency

Prepared by: **Matthew Blackwood**

Date of Review: _____

In responding to the following questions, please use additional sheets as necessary. Key

Participants:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Job Title</u>	<u>Role in Emergency</u>
Matthew Blackwood, PHD	Homeland Security Coordinator	Coordination of MRE delivery
Roy McCallister	Threat Preparedness/Response Officer	Coordination of MRE delivery, delivery of MREs, assessment of impacts to agriculture

Please provide a detailed summary of your Agency/Commission's role in responding to the state of emergency.

1. Coordination of MRE distribution and delivery of MREs across the state.
 - a. See attached AAR
2. Delivery and storage of Ice.
 - a. Drivers from the Donated Food picked up ice from various states
 - b. Excess ice is being stored in the Donated Foods warehouse
3. Providing food through the WVDA Donated Foods program.
4. Consultation on additional agricultural impacts related to the storm.

What went well and why?

(What were the successful steps taken towards achieving your objective?)

<u>Successes</u>	<u>How to ensure success in the future</u>
Department-wide support for activities	Continue involvement with all division directors. Provide adequate communication and notification.
Communication with SEOC	Primarily accomplished through emails and phone calls. Need to identify additional staff to work in SEOC.
MRE Mission	See attached AAR
Donated Foods providing food to Kanawha County.	Donated Foods will provide an inventory of supplies on hand. Requesting agency develops menu based upon inventory. Donate Foods would then supply necessary food from inventory. WVDA will not send out food in a shotgun approach.

What can be improved and how?

(What could have been done better? What can your agency/commission do differently in similar situations in the future to ensure success? What would be your advice to future emergency response teams?)

<u>What can be improved</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
Power restoration to agricultural facilities	Establish a way to identify agriculture facilities needing priority power restoration. This needs to be coordinated with the PSC and the various power companies.
Coordination of agricultural issues	Continue outreach with USDA County Agriculture Emergency Boards and WVU Extension Agents
MRE mission	See attached AAR
E-team requests	Need to have clear information related to agricultural concerns in E-team
No personnel assigned on a daily basis to State Emergency Operation Center	WVDA will work to identify additional personnel to be assigned to the SEOC during emergencies.
E-team requests. Inconsistent e-team alerts.	Access to e-team via smart phones or tablets.
Lack of Internet connectivity at loading area.	Exploring options for Aircards and computer access.